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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, GUATEMALA

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

February 3, 1954
DATE

REF : Embassy Despatch 653, February 1, 1954

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SUBJECT: Guatemalan Congress Declares Castillo Armas and Ydigoras Fuentes Traitors to the Nation.

The Guatemalan Congress on February 1 passed a motion declaring Colonel Carlos CASTILLO Armas and General Miguel YDIGORAS Fuentes traitors to the nation and stripping the latter of his rank on the grounds of their participation in the "plot" to overthrow the Arbenz Administration which the Guatemalan Government denounced last Friday, January 29. The motion was made by Guillermo OVANDO Arriola, President of Congress, and adopted after five hours of unbridled oratory in which Communist and other pro-Administration deputies openly accused the United States of complicity and even the Opposition prefaced its defense of anti-Communist elements with a strong rejection of "foreign intervention."

The opening speaker, after Ovando Arriola, was Víctor Manuel GUTIERREZ, the Communist Deputy who had the evening before been reelected Secretary General of the national labor federation, CGTG. He vitriolically accused the independent press of conducting a campaign to lay the groundwork for the plot, and went on to charge that the "traitors" involved in the plot had received money from the United Fruit Company and, according to the Communist Tribuna Popular's February 2 version, "the Yankee Department of State from the so-called Mutual Security Fund of $100 million." He said that there had been many domestic plots during the Arévalo Administration (1945-51) but this was the first time that there had been an international conspiracy against Guatemala's sovereignty. He turned on the local correspondents of foreign news agencies "who to our shame are Guatemalans" and charged that they and their international news agencies, under the influence of the United Fruit Company, were preparing a climate for intervention. He mentioned a film for a television show in which the Union de Trabajadores Libres, "in connivance with the North American Embassy," lent itself for a scene showing a demonstration of unemployed. He also charged "Braden, Wiley, Moors Cabot and Ambassador Peurifoy himself" of twisting the truth about Guatemala in preparation for the Caracas Conference and military intervention to overthrow Colonel Arbenz' Government.

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Gutierrez was followed by Deputies Carlos GARCIA Manzo for the PRG, Julio ESTRADA de la Hoz for the PAR, Hector FION Garma for the RN and others, all of whom supported the motion and denounced foreign intervention. Estrada de la Hoz referred to the liberties proclaimed by President Roosevelt and said that if the McCarthys, Wileys, Peurifoys, etc., had forgotten them, the Guatemalan people had not.

The Opposition spokesman was Deputy Humberto VIZCAINO Leal who opened by expressing his "repulsion" at the idea of foreign intervention. He then went on to score the government deputies for saying nothing of the torturing of the persons recently arrested, and defended the independent press which, he said, was only exercising its civic rights.

Later José Alberto CARDOZA, the Communist Deputy reelected CGTG First Vice Secretary General, resumed the attack against the independent press, asserting that the only thing it was not a traitor to was treason itself. He said that its attitude in publishing any agrarian, political or labor incident while not publishing government reports on plot "must oblige us to take a new attitude toward this reactionary press and avoid the libertinage practiced by El Imparcial, Prensa Libre, La Hora, El Espectador, Impacto, and various radio newsprograms like Radio Success."

In addition to declaring Castillo Armas and Ydigoras Fuentes "traitors," the Congress at this session adopted a resolution of solidarity with the Executive Branch's denunciation of the alleged plot and a resolution protesting to the U.S. Senate against "the aggressive campaign carried on against the democratic regime of Guatemala by the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Alexander Wiley, tending to prepare an international action of force against Guatemala." A third resolution addressed to the Congresses of other American Republics asked their solidarity "at this hour when the national sovereignty of Guatemala is threatened." Finally, the Congress expressed its thanks to the Congress of Chile for its recent motion in favor of Guatemala.

William L. Krieg
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

cc: AmEmbassy, El Salvador
AmEmbassy, Tegucigalpa
AmEmbassy, Managua

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